

DENIS TRAINOR – LACROSSE CHAMPION

Denis Trainor started playing lacrosse at the age of 10 in 1945 for Caulfield Under 16s and quickly progressed in his junior years up the ranks, and played in the senior team from 1953-1965. Caulfield in the 1940s- 1960s was a very strong club in Victoria, and fielded teams in every grade available and won many flags.

Denis stated that his father, who also played for Caulfield and Victoria, was a very hard man, made him practise all the time, and when they were practising in the backyard his father Frank would be firing passes at him from close distance and he had to learn quickly how to catch and throw accurately.

As far back as 1954 his skills as a player were recognized and write ups in the "Sporting Globe" when playing for Caulfield while serving in the army. "His midfield connecting play and clean stickwork was an object lesson to many older players" wrote "Bodycheck".

Denis played in Caulfield's A grade team from 1953-1965, playing in 4 grand finals, winning 2 and played alongside many of the legends of the game, including Ivan Bryning, Allan Gandy, Brian Griffin, Jack Church (The latter 3 from interstate), Don Miller and many others, winning 3 best and fairest awards along the way.



Above is Denis getting a pass away to a Victorian team mate, with close opposition from Bryan Gomer at Subiaco in the 1956 national carnival.

Victorian representation commenced for Denis in 1955 with the Victorian Colts (Under 21), where he was selected as vice-captain of the All Australian Colts team. He went on to represent Victoria at senior level from 1956-1964 (Only missing 1962 due to selection in the Australian team to tour the U.S.A.) and was appointed captain for 1961. In those days carnivals were only played every 3 years, with matches

against S.A. in the intervening years, thus the opportunities were not as great as they are now and travel was somewhat more complicated, and more expensive than today where you can hop on a plane and be in Perth in 3-4 hours. The modern era perhaps may not appreciate it but imagine 3 full days on a train to Perth, no business class or sleepers, you basically had to sleep where you sat. Denis recalls in 1956 on the return trip from Perth to Melbourne via Adelaide, the SA team was also on the train, and manager Jack Hodges arranged quite a large amount of beer for the players, and Denis recalls having quite a few with Allan Gandy and Ross Keen from SA, and having to push them off the train when they reached Adelaide, a little bit worse for wear!! Denis also commented on what a great job the WA administration did in organizing the 1956 carnival, there were events every day, and Kuljak was prominent in organizing events for their interstate guests.

Denis also represented Australia in the test match against the American team in 1959, which was only the second time an Australian team had played an overseas touring team (Canada toured in 1907), which was successful against the combined University of Virginia/Washington & Lee team, a game played at the MCG.

Denis was also selected in the first Australian team to depart our shores and play against the very best the U.S.A. had to offer in 1962.

Denis retired as a player in 1968 and commenced coaching at Caulfield in 1971.

Denis went on to coach Surrey Park in 1976 and coached the first Surrey Park team to win an A grand final in 1981 and again in 1984 and 1988, and runners-up in 1978, 1979, 1982 & 1983. In 1986 Denis moved to Chadstone and took them to their second state league grand final appearance. In 1992 he returned to Surrey Park and coached the Division 2 team to a premiership.

Denis also coached women's lacrosse, coaching Caulfield's A reserve team to a premiership in 1989, along with the Caulfield A grade team in 1991 and 1994-96, and also coached the Victorian women's team in 1990 and 1991.

Following his club coaching success Denis coached Victoria in 1972, 1978-1980 & 1983-1984 and was assistant coach 1977, 1981, 1988-89.

Denis coached Australia in 1986, was assistant coach in 1982 and coach of the Australian box lacrosse team in 1985. As part and parcel of his involvement with box lacrosse in 1985 he also coached the Victorian box team.

He is possibly the only coach to have coached and won premierships in 3 different disciplines – men's field, women's and men's box lacrosse.

Denis wasn't just a great player and coach he was also a determined and effective administrator, including:-

Vice-president Caulfield – 1960-1975

Selector of the Victorian senior team – 1969-1985

Vice-president of the V.A.L. A. – 1975-2003

President of Surrey Park – 1990-1994

Patron of Surrey Park

AWARDS

Vice-captain of the Caulfield team of the century

Certificate of Outstanding Performance from the Confederation of Australian Sport
-1983

Life membership V.A.L.A. in 1991

Life membership of Caulfield Lacrosse Club 1990

Life membership of Surrey Park Lacrosse Club in 1982

Australian Sports Medal in 2000

Victorian Past Presidents Trophy in 1969

Certificate of merit from the Australian Lacrosse Council in 1991

BEST AND TOUGHEST OPPONENTS?

Denis' toughest opponents include Roy Sloggett, Graham Reid, Phil Humphreys, Ian Jewitt, Alan "Chopper" Pearce, Ralph Turner, Brian Gomer & Ian Toy. Some of the modern generation that he never played against but rated highly were Alan Bower, Gus Garnsworthy and Steve Mounsey.

The meanest, toughest and scariest opponent? Allan "Chopper" Pearce!

BEST AUSTRALIAN PLAYERS IN HIS TIME?

Peter Cann, Jeff Kennedy, Brian Griffin, Allan Gandy, Eddie Toomey, Ray Duthy, Ross Keen, Michael Raggatt, Graeme Fox, Chris Brown, John Butkiewicz, Alan Rolley, Bill Stahmer, Rob Stark, Gary Tillotson, Teddy Hobbs, Ron Twomey, Doug Fox, Brad Skepper and Clay Johnson.



Here's trouble!!! Above is Denis at a Victorian best and fairest presentation night at a hotel in St Kilda, probably the George Hotel, with a couple of up and coming kids who did OK at the game – Peter Stiglich and Bill Stahmer, who both would have been about 18 at the time. Nice tie Willsy!

While there aren't too many players left in Denis' era to provide a testimonial, Roy Sloggett, champion Australian defender who played many years of club lacrosse against Denis, and many years with him in the Victorian team, noted "In the 1960 grand final, the scores were tied with 10 minutes of extra time to be played, Graeme Reddaway scored, Malvern was just in front. I could see how determined Denis was at the face-off, he was always going to get that ball, the ball came out, Denis swooped on it and tore towards goal and scored - he was unstoppable - and the game was tied. Caulfield went on to win the replay! He was fast, had good pace and a good shot for goal.

One lasting memory Denis has from 1956 is his old mate and then SA opponent Allan Gandy, who was heavily concussed against W.A. and taken to hospital where he was admitted. Victoria thought they would have it easy with Gandy in hospital, but when Denis rang the hospital to see how Allan was the nurse said that he had released himself from the hospital, but shouldn't be hard to spot as he was still wearing a hospital gown and had a very bare backside!!! Sadly for SA Allan Gandy only threw 5 goals against Victoria that day, so he couldn't have fully recovered!!

What a great career Denis had and what a great contribution he made to Australian lacrosse as a player and a coach, and has always been ready to contribute and help the game along in any way he can. While Denis may not be a big or tall man he and his record stand very tall in Australian lacrosse. Well played DT and thanks for your contribution to lacrosse in Australia.